

# Confluence News



Fall 2010

*Friends of Fort Union/Fort Buford*

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## Indian Arts Showcase a popular event

Crow style clothing and Plains Indian material culture were highlights of the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Indian Arts Showcase at Fort Union Trading Post NHS, August 14 & 15, 2010.

Featured speaker for the event was Larry Belitz of Hot Springs, S.D., a Plains Indian material cultural expert. His presentations included items he made as well as material that is of historical significance.

Mardell Plainfeather, a member of the Crow Nation from Billings, Mont., kicked off the weekend as opening speaker.

Also featured throughout the weekend event were artisans displaying their quillwork, drums, hide tanning, beadwork, ledger art, bow making, and other traditional native arts. Drum group Tatanka Oyate from Fort Peck, Mont., sang for the New Town Eagle Feather dancers, an American Indian youth dance group from New Town, N.D.

Fort Union interpreters Loren Yellow Bird Sr. and Thomas Bluestone, along with 2010 Junior Teen Princess Morgan Johnson of the Chippewa/Métis tribe of Trenton, N.D., also participated in the dance program, which was again well attended.

"Our most popular program continues to be the singing and



**Larry Belitz speaks to the crowd during the Indian Arts Showcase.**

dancing program. We had good weather and a good number of visitors who attended our dance program," said Loren Yellow Bird Sr., Park Ranger in charge of the event.

"The program with Mardell presented some very good information on the clothing of the Crow people. Larry Belitz' program gave the visitors a good look at the variations of material used by native people of the plains," he said. "The traditional artisans who participated continue to maintain a form of art style known only on the plains but adapted throughout the

country."

The Indian Arts Showcase continues to provide visitors a first-hand view of the Upper Missouri tribes' culture and the many roles it played right at Fort Union.

"We look forward to continuing this event to show the other half of the story which makes up the history of the site," Yellow Bird said..

The Indian Arts Showcase is a special event sponsored by Fort Union Trading Post NHS to include elements of American Indian culture in the history of the site.

# 28th annual Rendezvous a hit despite weather

According to reports from the staff at Fort Union, the weather for the 28<sup>th</sup> annual Fort Union Rendezvous, held June 17-20, was hit and miss this year.

Thursday, June 17, was billed as Kid's Day and despite the showers, the event was well attended by young people from throughout the area. Children participated in a variety of games including the beaver tail toss, pin the tail on the buffalo, shinny ball and Indian Hand games. They also learned to dance to an Indian drum and song. A total of 603 people attended for the day.

Friday was a miserable day as far as the weather was concerned – it was rainy, windy and cold. It was reported that few, if any, vendors on trader's row opened for business and Fur Trade Culture demonstrations were limited.

But Mother Nature redeemed herself on Saturday

with some nice weather. The Rendezvous Run in the morning set a record for attendance. All vendors were open and the scheduled list of craft and music demonstrations were given. We reported attendance of 1465 people.

The weather held for Sunday's activities and we had another good attendance day. Demonstrations included the Miles City Caledonian Pipe Band.

Richard Baker of Great Falls, Mont., was the headliner this year, giving first-person presentations daily as Pierre Cruzatte, the French boatman and fiddle player of the Lewis & Clark Expedition. He also performed on the fiddle for the dance held for the camp Saturday evening.

It was a good event and has been deemed a success with a total attendance for the four days of 3273 people.



**Kids' Day at Rendezvous was a great success, despite the rainy weather. At left, Curator Audrey Barnhart shows her pet snake, which Ellie Stenberg (right photo), Mason Ellvanger and Laiken Aune got a chance to pet.**



**Double Ball was mastered by Kathryn Stenberg, MaggiAnn Trowbridge and Mercedes Trowbridge (photo above), while other children learned some traditional Native American dances (photo at left).**







Privates Mike Schweitzer and Brandon Delvo (left photo) wash dishes in the barracks kitchen during the Fort Buford Military Encampment. The Miller Family (right photo) was on hand to provide some period music and dance lessons to the soldiers.

## Military Encampment held at Ft. Buford

### *Public gets glimpse of 1870s military life*

The Fort Buford Sixth Infantry was well represented at the annual Fort Buford Encampment Aug. 21-22, during which the reenactors made the reconstructed 1870s barracks their home for the weekend.

Activities included the manual of arms, marching drill and firing demonstrations of the .45/.70 Springfield Rifle and the 12-Pound

Mountain Howitzer. Visitors were treated to discussions of frontier military life. They were also able to browse and view the barrack's furnishings, as well as the men's personal equipment.

The military wood-burning kitchen stove received its usual heavy use with Corporal Tim Soiseth, ably assisted by Private Dave Finders, providing the sumptuous fare. The 19<sup>th</sup> century army never ate so well!

On Saturday evening the troops were treated to some fine period

music by the Miller Family of Mandan, N.D. Gary and Barbara Miller, together with their daughters Johannah and Suzannah, dressed in period attire and provided fine vocal and instrumental tunes of the 1860s and 70s. Johannah and Suzannah also instructed the willing, but much less accomplished soldiers, on period dance steps. Being short of female dance partners, the troops reluctantly sought male partners from those in attendance.

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## More scenes from Kids Day at Fort Union Rendezvous



Hand games with Ranger Thomas Bluestone (left photo) were popular with the children attending Kids' Day during the Fort Union Rendezvous. Another fun game was Pin the Tail on the Buffalo (right photo).



# Living History Weekend, Last Bell Tours held September 4 to 6 at Fort Union

Another Living History Weekend and Last Bell Tours at Fort Union will go down in the books as great successes.

During the annual live-in at the trading post held over Labor Day weekend, Sept. 4-6, the Fort Union Muzzle Loaders worked to repair the west shed they built back in the late 1990s. They toiled diligently throughout the three days, covering up the cracks in the board work, getting it ready for the winter. Paul Bauer led the construction crew and was ably assisted by Mike Schweitzer and Brandon Delvo. Arlene Finders, with the assistance of Dave Finders, provided quality meals for the reenactors who lived on site for the event.

The Last Bell Tours on Sept. 4 took visitors back to the year 1847. Fort staff, assisted by the Muzzle Loaders and area reenactors, portrayed events of the year including the appearance of Pelagie La Barge, the first white woman on the Upper Missouri; the proposed expansion of the Bourgeois House; the return of veteran trader Charles Larpenteur; and Father Nicholas Point's castigation of Bourgeois Edwin Denig for having two Indian wives.

During the final scene of the tours, visitors witnessed the appearance of Alexander Harvey of the opposition Harvey, Primeau & Company at Fort William on the confluence. They saw Harvey boldly attempt to seduce American Fur Company employees to join his own company. Six tours were given that evening, with 110 people attending.



**Reenactor Chris Floyd of Minot portrayed Alexander Harvey during the Last Bell Tours.**



**It takes many staff and volunteers to pull off an event like the Living History Weekend and Last Bell Tours. Pictured here are some of the reenactors who participated in the weekend's events.**



# Fellowship recipient to research boat building

Michael Cohan, recipient of the 2010 Friends of Fort Union/Fort Buford Fellowship, sites his intense interest in the fur trade for his desire to do an in-depth study of boats on the Upper Missouri.

In September, Cohan, of Libby, Mont., spent more than a week doing research on boat building at fur trading posts on the Upper Missouri.

Man-powered boats included keelboats and mackinaws, as well as other types of watercraft. Keelboats were used before steamboats to haul people and goods upriver. Mackinaws were used to float furs and robes down river to market.

“Nobody has ever done an in-depth study of man-powered boats on the upper Missouri,” Cohan said. Who better than himself to write the study?

“I greatly appreciate the opportunity to do research in the Fort Union library,” he said. “I really love Fort Union.”

The Friends fellowship was created to provide researchers access to the materials in Fort Union’s extensive library and research files, resulting in manuscripts on various aspects of the fur trade.



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## More shots from Living History Weekend



Members of the Fort Union Muzzle Loaders spent the weekend repairing the west shed, which they built back in the late 1990s.



Judith Greyflower, Rhonda Pingert, Cassie the dog, and Michael Cohan visit at Cohan’s 1839 Topographical Engineer camp during the Living History Weekend at Fort Union.



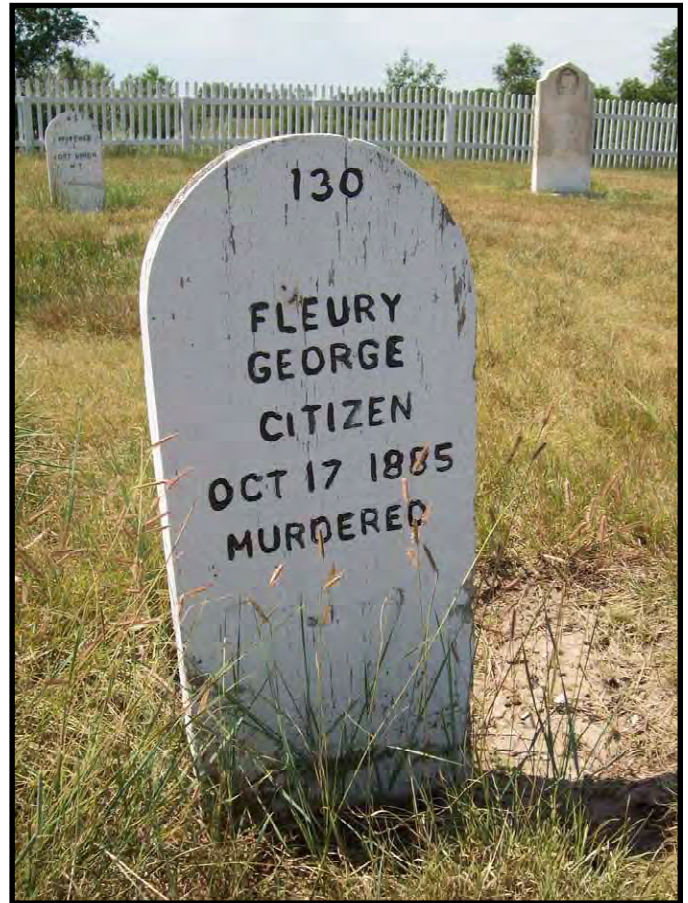
# Cemetery Walk planned Oct. 23 at Fort Buford

Stories of disease, accident, murder and suicide are told at the ever-popular annual "Cemetery Walk" at the Fort Buford State Historic Site Cemetery. The sixth annual event will begin at 7 p.m. CDT Saturday, Oct. 23.

Scores of interpretive wooden markers, which were prepared by the Fort Buford Sixth Infantry Reenactment Association, describe the demise of men, women, and children, including citizens, scouts and soldiers. Some of their stories are brought to life by actors during the Cemetery Walk. Tours are led by guides, in 15-minute intervals, from one marker to another, hearing the stories of those buried there.

While it is a cemetery walk, taking place after dark, Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center employee Kerry Finsaas wants to reassure parents that the event is family friendly and will be enjoyed by both adults and children. Those planning to attend needn't worry about standing in the cold, waiting for their tour to begin. They can relax, stay warm and enjoy refreshments in the nearby Confluence Interpretive Center.

The site is located 24 miles northeast of Sidney, and 25 miles west of Williston, N.D. The site and center are managed by the State Historical Society of North Dakota.



The personal stories of those buried at the Fort Buford Cemetery will be told during the annual Cemetery Walk on Oct. 23. Those planning to attend are reminded that the site runs on Central Time.

## *Saying Good-Bye*

It is with regret that Fort Union recently said good-bye to two long-time employees.

July saw the retirement of Dennis Borud, who had worked at the Fort since 1987 as a member of the maintenance crew.

October will bring the retirement of Chief Ranger Randy Kane, who has been at the Fort since 1995.



Always popular at Rendezvous are the Miles City Caledonian Pipe Band and dancers who perform on Sunday afternoon.

# From the Book Shelf

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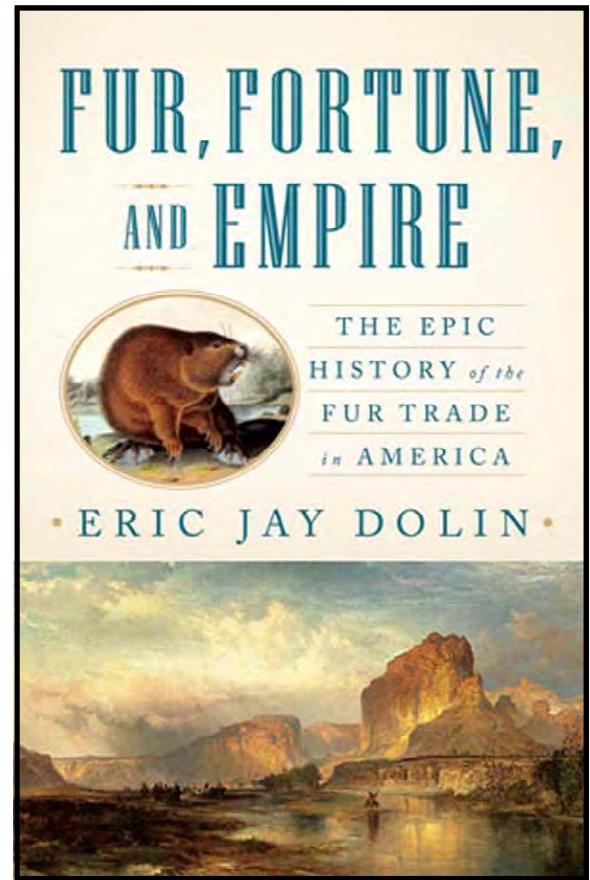
Dolin cuts a broad swath with his tale of the American fur trade in what became the United States. The author states that from the early 1600s to the late 1800s the fur trade was a powerful force in shaping the course of American history. It played a major role in the settlement and evolution of the colonies and the growth of the country.

Early in the book Dolin goes into considerable detail on the life habits of the beaver and the trapping of such. He then launches into a detailed description of the early competition on the Atlantic Coast between the English, French, Dutch and Swedes, and how their desire for fur brought settlement to the continent.

The story flows through to the eventual English control of the continent, the American Revolution, the conquest of the Old Northwest and eventually fur trade activity beyond the Mississippi River. Dolin describes the influence of the fur trade on the advance of each frontier. Finally, he describes the preeminence of the buffalo robe trade and its part in the demise of the buffalo.

This is a good book for those who want to trace the evolution of the fur trade through America and looking for a discussion of the role which key figures played along the way.

*This book review is brought to you by staff members of Fort Union Trading Post, National Historic Site. The book is offered for sale in the Fort's bookstore.*



**Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America** by Eric Jay Dolin (W.W. Norton & Company, 2010). \$29.95 cloth



Fort Union Seasonal Ranger Ken Anderson prepares to fire a black powder musket during the Fort Union Rendezvous.



# Civil War event held July 17 at Fort Union



The Civil War was the topic of discussion July 17 at Fort Union. The event featured close order drill, a series of tent talks, a cannon firing demonstration, a musket firing demonstration, and more. The event moved into Williston State College that evening for a Civil War Roundtable (left photo), and a first-person portrayal of Private Charles Pettigrew, a known galvanized Yankee, by Seasonal Ranger Woody Searles (right photo). Members of the panel were seasonal rangers Richard Stenberg, Dave Carr, Searles and Chief Ranger Randy Kane.

*Promoting the history of the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence area since 1984*

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